

March 28, 2008

Member of the California State Legislature
C/O Assemblymember Jim Beall, Jr.
California State Capitol, Room 5016
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Legislator:

I am writing to support an important piece of legislation, AB 1887 (Beall), the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Parity Bill. The bill requires health insurers to cover mental health and substance abuse illnesses just as they would for any physical illness.

Patients seeking mental health services are routinely discriminated against by Health Plans that limit or deny treatment for any illness if it is mental health related. Medical researchers nationwide recognize mental illness and substance abuse as chronic diseases, not behavioral. Yet, those afflicted with mental illness or substance abuse get fewer doctor visits and face severe limitations on the number of days they can be treated at a hospital as compared to conditions perceived as a "physical" such as diabetes or cancer.

Currently, the law does not require health care service plans and health insurers to provide services for mental health and substance abuse disorders. It only requires insurers that do offer coverage to provide minimal coverage for severe mental illness. This limitation excludes best practices for treatment which often exceed the number of days an individual may obtain treatment. Also the limitation excludes numerous unrecognized debilitating mental illnesses from coverage and ignores substance abuse treatment.

AB 1887 can rescue and revive thousands of lives and families from the ravages of mental illness and substance abuse while saving millions in taxpayer dollars in human service and law enforcement costs.

The state legislature now has the opportunity to end the discrimination against those who suffer from mental health and substance abuse. I urge you to voice your support for the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Parity Bill and vote yes on AB 1887.

Best regards,

Name
Address